CLAY GEERDES' COMIX WAVE 155

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Theory is that Herbie Popnecker was based on Lou Costello. In **BUCK PRIVATES**, Lou plays a little guy named Herbie who gets a lollipop from a girl named Judy. And in case you thought rap was new, Lou does a rap in this movie from 1941.

ECO-THRILLER

I really enjoyed the lecture on the end of the environment tacked on after the climax of Steven Segall's **ON DEADLY GROUND**. Segall is more interesting than the character he plays in those escapist fantasies for the unemployed disenfranchised quasi-literate proletariat. Where Arnie Schwarzenegger routinely throws people this way and that when he isn't mowing down crowds of bad guy extras with a plastic Uzi, Segall's standard scene is right out of an old Tim McCoy depression Western. McCoy would stroll through the batwing doors of a saloon, saunter up to the bar, order a glass of milk, and wait for the extras in the black hats to giggle, chuckle, and challenge him, then he would beat up half a dozen of them without losing his black hat or getting his trademark black frock coat dusty. Segall strolls into a bar in Alaska, watches a poor Eskimo drunk get kicked around by a guy three times his size, then, after hesitating just long enough to let the adrenalin flow through audience, Segall beats, kicks, and karate chops half a dozen guys into unconsciousness. Like McCoy, Segall always turns out to be a Federal undercover agent on assignment. I enjoyed Michael Caine's portrayal of a cold-blooded capitalist oil dealer. I always thought Caine would have made a good James Bond, but what do I know?

Whatever happens in the electronic age, we're doomed to live it over and over via TV. Guilty or not, O. J. Simpson's hell is to watch his own deterioration take place in the tabloids and on the talk shows. Each time he is shown in close-up, he looks older, more tired, burned out. The jackals are waiting. What fate awaits the visible man?

CON GAMES

Here is how JimThompson described the role of a news butcher in **HEED THE THUNDER** [1946]: "The news butcher ... was so much batten for the corporation that employed him. Rather than depend upon a percentage of his sales, they absorbed his cash bond by means of 'loading' him with near-spoiled fruit, perishable sandwiches, and unsalable knick-knacks. Then, when he could not or would not supply more bond, they wrote him off and employed another agent. The individual...could not get his desserts in a contest with a corporation; and so the news agent who hoped to survive did so at the traveling public's expense and by the predication of his own morals. He who has wondered at the quick spreading of a filthy joke has never seen the news butch's line of pornographic booklets. The news butch was in on the green-goods racket. He was a peddler of brass watches and glass diamonds. He sold marked cards and crooked dice. And almost always he sold whisky [145]." In other words, a lot of people got their **TIAJUANA BIBLES** from news butchers. These hustlers would sell jewelry they claimed was gold and people only learned it was false when a finger or an arm turned green from contact with it, hence the *green goods racket.* Marked playing cards are often off-sized with the aces and royal cards slightly smaller or larger than the other cards. The variation is minimal and it takes a sharp observer to tell the difference. Since it is possible to buy these cards, pros could pull out a brand new deck in a small town game and win a reasonable amount of money before losing a few small pots and taking off. Crooked or loaded diced are weighted so that the player always throws a seven. The con man who used a crooked pair of dice could win in the short run, mainly with country rubes, but he was in danger if he stuck around too long. The con would enter a local game, bet low, pull a switch when the dice passed to him, win for awhile, then switch back and loss a few low bets before easing away from the game. It is as easy to palm a pair of dice as it is to palm a coin and with practice a good con can pull the switch easily as he shakes the dice before his roll. He shakes the straight dice, but releases the palmed loaded pair. Since the shooter or roller or player picks up the dice after a win and only passes them by hand after crapping out, others in the game have no opportunity to feel the weight difference between the straight and loaded dice. The eyes are always on the rolling dice, so the others do not see the con hide the second pair of dice in a side pocket. He easily switches the dice while the others are picking up their money or laying down fresh bets. While common, dice games were illegal in most states, so they were held in alleys and warehouses and garages, usually in areas that were not that well-lighted, because the players did not want a passing cop to see too much light. This made life easy for the traveling pro. Jim Thompson dealt with this lifestyle in **THE GRIFTERS.**

ANT SMOKERS IN BAHRAIN

Teenaged junkies in Bahrain are sniffing the fumes given off by ants when they are crushed and rolling up the little creatures into joints which they smoke. Are they getting high? Who knows, but the police are busting them anyway. You can even buy prepackaged ant. A small packet of Samaseem [Arabic for ants] goes for up to $135 in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. The government says the young people are into ants because they can't afford higher priced narcotics like heroin and hashish.

CRUMB ON FILM

Terry Zwiegoff's film **CRUMB** was show at the Toronto Internatioal Film Festival in September of this year. I have not seen the film, but a still from it appeared in the San Francisco **BAY GUARDIAN** [9/21/94, p. 38].

For years brothels in the Bay Area have functioned under the cover of Massage Parlors. In Thailland, the place to get laid is a barber shop. It's true. I saw the clip on *Rough Guide*. Barber poles all over Bangkok. But in San Mateo, California, you go to a Tanning Salon. Police are keeping an eye on these *Spas*.

NAKED ANGEL

Gary Stephens accused Marin auxilliary volunteers of censorship when they had his naked angel removed from this year's Marin Designers Showcase. Some visitors were upset when they saw that the undressed angel appeared to have an aqua hard on. Gary claimed the aqua dong was hanging, not erect. Said he thought of it as a little Cupid-penis. The appendage, about an inch long and surrounded by a spiral of red, orange, and yellow pubic hairs, hung from a two-foot clay angel. Removed after five days because of complaints, the naked angel was rehung in the lobby of the ABC Broadcast Center on Front Street in San Francisco September 22 and 23 where folks could check it out. Mustn't offend that old money in Marin County. To understand the hypocrisy and the underlying humor in this, you have to know that a lot of the rich folks in Marin these days made their money off sex, drugs, and rock and roll in the sixties when public nudity was an everyday occurence.

Something had gone terribly wrong in the civilization of this country. The cars were bumper to bumper, going nowhere.

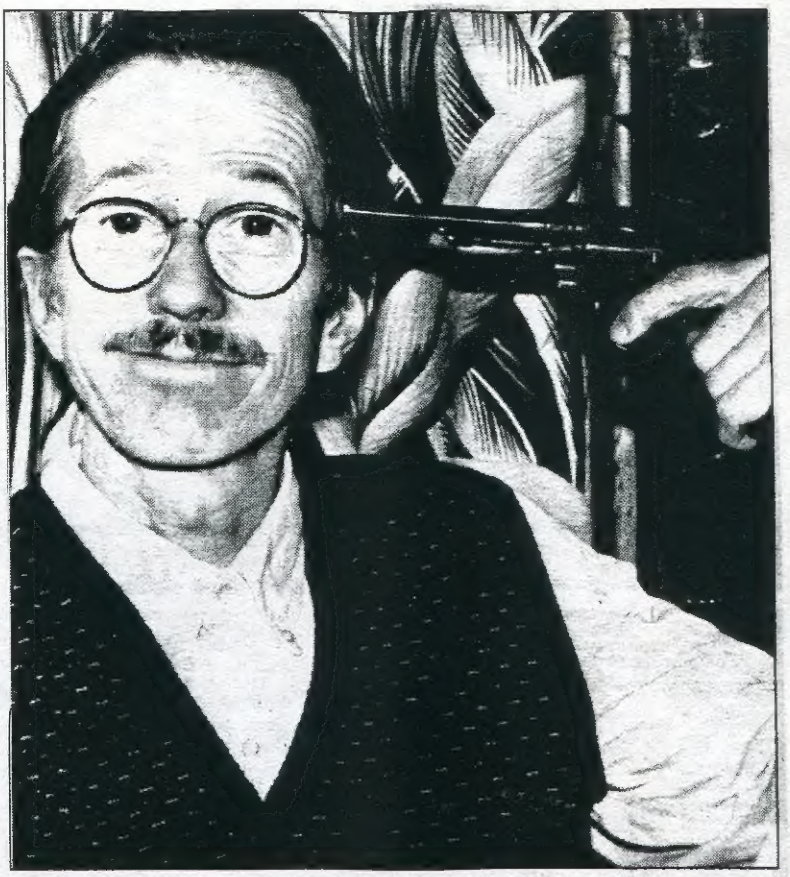
Tama Janowitz. **THE MALE CROSS-DRESSER SUPPORT GROUP**. New York: Crown, 1992.

The **WORDS AND PICTURES** Museum is moving to 140 Main Street, Northampton, MA [01060]. The grand opening is scheduled for December 31, 1994. Should be a memorable New Year's Eve party.

Sexist Quote of the Month

"you'd never want to let women actually get into power. All women are cunts, and you can't trust them."

-Gene Roddenberry.
Joel Engel
Gene Roddenberry
The Myth and the Man
Behind Star Trek
1994, p. 241.



Gunplay: *Robert Crumb in Terry Zwigoff's* Crumb.

Why is there no underground fandom? How come no one picked up the torch and ran with it? Why are there science fiction conventions and comic conventions all over the country that ignore underground comix and characters?

FELIX REDUX

FELIX THE CAT: THE CARTOON MAKER , a CD-ROM, will be on sale by Thanksgiving from Big Top Productions. Now all you need is a couple of grand worth of computer equipment and your little kid can make up his or her own cartoon! Doncha love it? Felix started out as a cartoon character developed by Otto Messmer at Pat Sullavan's studio circa 1919. He was in the funny papers by 1923 and had a long run until 1967. Like Betty Boop, the little cat based on Charlie Chaplin and Kipling's **THE CAT THAT WALKED BY HIMSELF**, seems to have more than nine lives. There are pirate t-shirts and other items all over the place.

Max Traffic has teamed up with Steve Willis to write the **WHITE BUFFALO GAZETTE**. $1 and a stamp to Steve for a sample. POB 390, McCleary, WA 98557-0390.